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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
POSITION CLASSIFICATION GUIDE
FOR
DEPUTIES, ASSISTANTS, AND RELATED POSITIONS

I. Introduction.

This guide covers principles and concepts to be followed in General Services Administration in the evaluation of Classification Act positions of deputy, assistant, assistant to, and special assistant.

Based on overall management considerations, GSA has established the practice of holding deputy and assistant positions to a minimum. The GSA Organization Manual, OPA P 5440.1, 1-12, indicates some of these considerations as follows: "Unless there is a demonstrated need for deputy and assistant type positions and they are properly utilized, such positions tend to confuse lines of communications, prevent maximum decentralization of authority and responsibility, add unnecessarily to the number of organizational echelons or administrative levels, impede day-to-day operations, and increase costs."

Because of the variations in the duties and responsibilities of assistant and related positions, specific grade level criteria are not provided in this guide. The major groupings of such positions and applicable evaluation considerations are discussed below. References to specific Civil Service Commission position classification standards are included, as appropriate.

II. Deputies and Full Assistants.

A. Coverage and Exclusions.

The term deputy or assistant, as used in this guide, designates a position which is second in the line of command, shares fully with the head of the organizational entity in carrying out all phases of the work of the organization, and acts in the absence of the head of the organization with full responsibility for the work of that official. In GSA, the term deputy (e.g., Deputy Director and Deputy Regional Director) is ordinarily used at the division level and above and the term assistant (e.g., Assistant Chief, Assistant Buildings Manager, or Assistant Depot Manager) is normally used at the branch or lower levels. This distinction between deputy and assistant is merely a titling practice and has no classification significance.

Certain GSA positions with the title of assistant are excluded from coverage by this guide. The excluded positions are those key positions which have the principal responsibility for planning, directing, and coordinating one or more major programs, e.g., positions of

Assistant Commissioner, Assistant Archivist, and Assistant General Counsel. These positions do not serve in the normal "full assistant" relationship, but are in responsible charge of assigned programs which constitute only a portion of the programs for which their superiors are responsible. These positions should be evaluated, as are other program manager positions, on the basis of responsibility for the assigned programs.

Also excluded from this guide are positions which are not assistants in an organizational sense but which have the word "assistant" as a part of the class title in lieu of such terminology as officer, analyst, or specialist. Included in this category are positions such as Administrative Assistant, Management Assistant, and Procurement Assistant. Such positions do not have the direct relationship of full participation with a superior position which is characteristic of positions covered by this guide. Accordingly, such positions are evaluated on the basis of the duties and responsibilities assigned and the standards, guides, and evaluation techniques appropriate for the occupation.

B. Management Criteria.

From a management viewpoint, criteria have been established for application in the establishment or continuation of deputy and assistant positions in GSA. These criteria (GSA Organization Manual, 1-12a thru d) provide the following minimum requirements for the establishment or continuation of such positions:

"A deputy or full assistant position may be established when the volume and nature of the principal's work is such that it cannot be accomplished by one person. In addition, the work can be divided to occupy two positions substantially full-time after maximum delegations of authority to lower levels have been accomplished. The deputy or full assistant is a responsible line officer who participates with the principal in carrying out the full range of management responsibilities and acts with full authority over the total work of the organization during the principal's absence or unavailability. He must be in full charge of one or a combination of the following:

- (1) Total work of one or more segments or work locations;
- (2) Day-to-day operations;
- (3) Planning, developmental, or special assignment work; or
- (4) Training, liaison, or technical assistance work."

Unless the above minimum requirements are met, a written justification must be provided and approved for the establishment or continuation of a deputy or assistant position. For example, the need of the position for training purposes (not necessarily for the position of the principal) may be considered as adequate justification. As another example,

adequate justification may exist where an organization is new or expanding, a premium is placed on getting underway, and additional top level assistance is needed for an extended period, e.g., for more than a year.

C. Evaluation.

1. Evaluation Principles in CSC Standards. The general policy of the Civil Service Commission is not to cover deputy or assistant positions in its published standards; however, references in a number of CSC standards establish the general principles to be followed in the evaluation of such positions. These principles provide, as a general rule, for the classification of a full assistant position at one grade lower than the principal position. (For two-grade interval positions, the professional grade concept, i.e., GS-5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, etc., is used) In applying the general rule, determinations must be made as to the proper evaluation of the principal position and the basis for that evaluation, the exact role of the assistant in carrying out the responsibilities of the principal, and the extent to which the same factors which serve as the basis for the evaluation of the principal position also apply to the assistant. These principles are outlined in the following standards:

a. Guide for Appraisal of Scientific Positions Proposed for GS-16, 17, and 18, April 1964, page 10. "For positions such as deputies, special assistants, coordinators, advisors, and managers of functional segments of programs (e.g., quality control) who provide specialized support and assistance to program directors, the authority and responsibility need to be considered in terms of both the level of responsibility of the program director and the role of the assistant in discharging that responsibility."

b. Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part I, February 1965, page 2. "The factor and element values and grade conversion table in this part are not geared to the direct evaluation of 'assistant chief' type positions. Such positions may be classified in relation to the position of the 'chief', or supervisor of the unit. Ordinarily, where the 'assistant chief' is a full assistant to the chief, occupies a position in the direct supervisory line, and shares in, and assists the chief with respect to, all phases of the unit's work, the 'assistant chief' position will be one grade lower than that of the chief."

c. Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part II, February 1965, page 29. Part II of the Guide provides as an exclusion: "'Assistant Chief' positions. As in Part I, the material in Part II is not geared to the direct evaluation of such positions. It is always necessary, though, to consider the appropriate grade of the unit chief's position (and the basis for that grade) in evaluating an assistant chief position."

d. Personnel Administration Series, GS-201, Part I, June 1966, page 35. "The grade of an assistant personnel officer is to be derived by comparison with the grade of the personnel officer whom he assists and in consideration of the degree to which he participates in planning and directing the personnel program. A full assistant whose participation extends to all phases of the personnel program, will typically be classified one grade below the grade appropriate for the personnel officer. When the personnel officer's grade is based on a level 3 character of program operation, the one-grade differential will hold only if there is evidence that the assistant personnel officer has made a significant contribution to such a level of operation.

"The position of a limited assistant will typically be two grades below the grade of the personnel officer."

e. Budget Administration Series, GS-560, June 1959, page 47. "Deputy or assistant budget officer positions which share responsibility for the total budgetary affairs of the organization served should be classified at the next lower grade to that which would normally be assigned to the budget officer. (It would be a rare circumstance that the budgetary program of the GS-11 budget officer could warrant a full-time deputy or assistant to share the total responsibility. If such a position does exist, classification to the GS-9 level rather than GS-10 is usually proper.)"

f. Supply Program Management Series, GS-2003, June 1972, page 3. "The standard does not specifically cover positions of assistant supply management officers. However, criteria described in the guide can be applied to the assistant or deputy position, with adjustment as necessary in measuring the degree to which the assistant or deputy participates in the full range of work of the manager. A full assistant, whose participation extends to all phases of the supply program, will typically be classified one grade below the grade appropriate for the supply management officer. However, this should not be a mechanical determination. In each situation the actual relationship between the two positions and the extent of the assistant's or deputy's authority must be considered in determining the appropriate grade for the position."

2. Application of the Evaluation Principles. In evaluating a deputy or assistant position, the classifier must assure himself of the proper classification of the principal position, i.e., the position of the chief, director, manager, or supervisor with whom the assistant shares responsibility. This will involve evaluating, or confirming the evaluation of, the principal position in accordance with appropriate position classification standards or guides such as the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide. With possibly one exception, the grade of the principal position will not be affected by the presence or absence of an assistant position. The principal position is credited

with responsibility for all of the work assigned to his unit and this is not changed by setting up a position of assistant or by abolishing such a position. In the situation where the establishment of an assistant position frees the supervisor to perform higher level duties which he would otherwise have no time to perform, the establishment or abolishment of the assistant position could have a grade impact on the principal position.

Normally, the grade of the full assistant position is one grade below that of the principal position; however, the grade of the assistant should not be fixed automatically at this level. Full consideration must be given to the basis on which the principal position is classified and the extent to which the same considerations also apply to the assistant position. In this connection, a very careful analysis should be made of the assistant position when the principal position has been placed in a higher grade on the basis of such considerations as the "impact of the man on the job," individual duties and responsibilities which are of a higher grade level than the supervisory duties and responsibilities, and working under "general administrative supervision" rather than "general technical supervision."

In establishing the one-grade differential between the principal position and the assistant position, the normal pattern of one-grade interval or two-grade interval work should be followed. Specifically, in two-grade interval situations, the normal grade pattern would be GS-5, GS-7, GS-9, GS-11, GS-12, GS-13, etc. Therefore, if the principal position is in grade GS-11 in a two-grade interval situation, GS-9 would normally be considered the appropriate grade for a full assistant. However, where special strengthening features in the assistant position and relationships between that position and other positions in the organization support such action from a classification standpoint, the assistant position may be classified in GS-10. Before classifying the position to GS-10, the classifier should assure himself that this does not cause inconsistency with CSC standards or with the classifications of similar positions.

Application of the one-grade differential between the principal and the assistant position may place the assistant in the same grade level as subordinate unit chief positions or working level positions. This will occur in situations where there is no intermediate grade level to accommodate the assistant position or where an intermediate grade level is available (e.g., GS-10 in the above example) but is not appropriate based on valid evaluation considerations.

III. Assistants to and Special Assistants.

A. Coverage.

Assistants to and Special Assistants vary considerably in their makeup. Such positions differ from deputies and full assistants covered under "II," above, in that they provide staff assistance to the principal position rather than participation with that position in the direct line management and supervision of the work of the organization.

Assistants to or special assistants may be concerned with restricted areas of their supervisor's overall responsibility, or with all areas. In the latter case, they may be difficult to distinguish from deputy or assistant positions, since they may be responsible for reviewing work in each area, developing or recommending procedures, or advising the supervisor on courses of action to take.

B. Management Criteria.

The management criteria for the establishment or continuation of an assistant to or special assistant position (GSA Organization Manual, 1-12c) are as follows: "An assistant to or special assistant position may be established or continued when the volume and nature of the principal's work is such that it cannot be accomplished by one person and the principal does not desire or already has a deputy or full assistant. Substantially full-time assistance of a staff nature is needed for activities that are not appropriate for delegation to lower levels. Duties that could be delegated and do not require exercise of authority over operating elements may be assigned only as necessary to assure full-time performance for the assistant to or special assistant. Responsibility and authority shall be clearly defined. Authority shall be limited to the following:

- (1) Review of material prepared by subordinates of the principal;
- (2) Rejection of unsatisfactory submissions; and
- (3) Preparation of recommendations for approval of the principal."

From the management viewpoint, the following types of assignments are considered appropriate for assistant to and special assistant positions:

- "1. Coordination of substantive areas to assure good communications;
2. Technical research and preparation of reports;
3. Analysis of information, appraisal of results obtained, and identification of unsatisfactory results;
4. Planning research, evaluation, and development;
5. Relations with public, unions, and other agencies;
6. Performance of a complex or highly technical function requiring specialized assistance;

7. Special assignments, such as problem solving and trouble shooting; or
8. Combination of the above." (GSA Organization Manual, 1-12f).

C. Evaluation.

1. Coverage in CSC Standards. Assistant to and special assistant positions, as defined in the criteria contained in the GSA Organization Manual, are staff type positions. Staff positions are evaluated on the basis of the specific duties and responsibilities assigned, using the appropriate position classification standards for the work performed. Depending upon the duties and responsibilities assigned, such staff positions may be of the same grade level as, or at a lower grade level than, a line position of full deputy or assistant.

A number of the current position classification standards provide criteria for the evaluation of staff type positions allocable to the particular series covered by the standard. These standards are also useful for comparative purposes in the evaluation of staff type positions in other series for which there are no directly applicable standards and in drawing relationships between staff and operational positions. Other standards cover work which may constitute segment(s) of the work of a staff position. Current standards which may be useful in the evaluation of staff positions include the following:

a. Personnel Administration Series, GS-201, Part II, June 1966. This standard describes staff type personnel positions concerned with program evaluation and program development at grades GS-7 through GS-13. (In the same standard, operations positions are described at GS-7 through GS-12.) The standard distinguishes between grade levels on the basis of (1) complexity and difficulty of the technical personnel problems dealt with, as reflected by organization characteristics, job characteristics, and nature of guides; (2) management advisory service functions; (3) nature of supervision received; (4) authority; and (5) personal contacts.

b. Management Analysis Series, GS-343, February 1972. The standard for this occupation, which describes positions at grades GS-5 through 15, is frequently used for comparative purposes in evaluating other kinds of positions or portions of positions. In using the standard for such purposes a very careful analysis is required to assure that the criteria and specific examples it contains are considered in their proper context. Essentially, Management Analysts are concerned with the improvement of management and solution of management problems. The work of such positions requires a high order of analytical ability and a comprehensive knowledge of the theories, functions and techniques of management. Properly utilized, this standard can be quite helpful in evaluating some of the assignments and projects of special assistants.

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Approved For Release 2002/01/08 : CIA-RDP83-01004R000100170001-5 1961, and Technical Writing and Editing Series, GS-1083, April 1960. These standards describe editing and writing positions at grades GS-5 through 12. The standards are useful in evaluating speech-writing and similar assignments of some special assistant positions.

d. Property Disposal Series, GS-1104, June 1970. This standard describes staff type positions at the GS-9 through GS-13 levels. Such positions are concerned with inspections of disposal programs, provision of instructions and interpretations to subordinate organizations, monitoring of disposal programs, providing of expert advice, reviewing and making decisions on appeals, and other staff activities.

2. Application of Standards. The treatment of staff positions in CSC standards, such as those listed above, and in other CSC issuances present several basic concepts for consideration in the evaluation of staff positions, including assistant to and special assistant positions. Specifically:

a. Staff Versus Operational Positions. The assignment of staff duties does not necessarily place a position at a higher grade than an operations position in the same occupation. Both staff and operations positions are found at the lower and intermediate grade levels; however, the upper grade range of staff positions is frequently higher than that of operations positions because of the greater potential for more responsible assignments.

b. Experts and Consultants. Some positions (staff as well as operational) serve as experts or consultants within assigned areas. There are no standard grades for this type of work. Some of the principal considerations in evaluating an expert or consultant position are:

(1) The breadth of the area of specialization or expertise. Other things being equal, an increase in breadth means a higher-level position. Thus, the expert on construction equipment has a stronger position than the expert on power shovels; the expert on telephone communications systems has a stronger position than the expert on telephone switchboards. The broader the area, the greater is the knowledge required of basically related, but different, subject.

(2) The intensity of the specialization. This means depth, not narrowness. Intense specialization involves a proportionately higher knowledge of related subjects. Thus, the expert on nuclear physics may very well have a better position than an expert on physics. The specialization may be narrow but intense, and thus outweigh a wide area specialization of relatively little intensity.

(3) The organization level. The higher the level for which the individual is an expert, the stronger the position. Other things being equal, the expert for the agency has a stronger position than the expert for a service or a regional office, the expert for a service has a stronger position than the expert for a division. Mounting the organizational scale in expert or consultant work usually means an increase in commitment authority for the position.

One of the essential steps in the evaluation process is the identification of the expert or consultant. The fact that a position is the only one in the establishment does not automatically characterize the incumbent as an expert in that type of work. The sole x-ray operator in an office is not automatically an expert in x-ray work; the sole chemist in a laboratory is not automatically an expert in chemistry or in chemical analysis. There must be evidence that the employee works with almost complete independence of action, has broad commitment authority, and is called upon to do such things as:

- (1) Give advice to other individuals or units;
- (2) Represent the organization in dealings with other organizations, other agencies, or the Central Office;
- (3) Serve on committees studying problems in his field;
- (4) Testify before committees;
- (5) Present papers before public or private associations; and
- (6) Answer oral or written inquiries directed to him because he is recognized as the expert in his field.

Recognition of the incumbent as an expert by others is important. It is essential that the evidence of such recognition be documented and readily available as backup material for the position description, e.g., documents demonstrating or referring to the "expert" status of the employee, instances of "expert" work done, etc. Without such material, it is difficult for the classifier to distinguish between positions that are expert and those which are not. A great many positions are responsible in some capacity for advising other personnel and dealing with other organizations, but only a few of these are in fact "experts" in the sense in which this term is used in the Commission standards.

The presence of more than one expert in a specialization tends to minimize the expert role and raises a question about the validity of a premium grade for the expert. While there must be a limitation on the number of experts within a specialization, there can be more than one in certain circumstances without a minimizing effect. One such situation which might support more than one expert would be a large geographical area to be served.

c. Organizational Location. A staff position, whether or not it includes expert or consultant responsibilities, may be affected

by its organizational location. For example, the position responsible for developing technical procedures at the agency level is usually a stronger position than one developing such procedures at the regional office level; a position at the regional office level is usually stronger than one at a depot or installation level. This results from such factors as the increased scope and impact of decisions, the greater difficulty of coordination problems, and the higher and more responsible level of contacts.

d. Reviewers. Responsibility for the review of work of other employees is an important part of some special assistant or assistant to positions. The personnel management booklet, Classification Principles and Policies, issued by the Civil Service Commission in June 1963, page 44, treats the review responsibility as follows:

"Reviewing the work of another is frequently, but not always, a part of the supervisory process. In either event, its effects on the grade levels of the position of the reviewer and of the position whose work is reviewed depend primarily on the kind and purpose of the review made.

"In some situations, such as preparing data for automatic processing, accuracy may be so important that one employee double-checks the work of another employee by repeating the work process of the first employee to be certain that the results are identical. Such 'review' is not considered to have additional classification weight since both employees utilize the same knowledge and skills and the assurance of accuracy rests upon agreement of results rather than a demand upon the 'reviewer' for greater knowledge, judgment, and accuracy.

"On the other hand, where there is a responsibility for review which presumes a greater knowledge and skill, and involves a responsibility for accepting, rejecting, or revising the work of another employee (and in many cases, instructing the employee in his work), the review has greater classification significance. However, the actual grade-level effect (if any) of such review responsibility would depend on an evaluation of all the aspects of the job...

"An important consideration is the relationship of the review to the element of principal value in the work. For example, review of work the grade value of which is based on the inventiveness or creativity required may be solely to assure conformance with clear, simple policy and may have no effect at all on the grade value of the work. In fact, the grade value of such a review may be less than the grade value of the creative work itself."

e. Summary. There is no simple method for determining the grade of a special assistant or assistant to position. The complete

analysis and evaluation procedure must be followed. This includes breaking the position into meaningful, identifiable elements; determining the individual worth of each of the elements or of combinations of elements through appropriate comparisons with standards, guides, and precedent classifications; and finally reversing the process to look at the position as a whole in order to determine its full worth through consideration of its ultimate purpose, place in the organization, and relationships to other positions with equal, greater, or less responsibilities.

IV. Positions with Responsibility for "Acting in the Absence of."

A. General Rule.

Some positions have responsibility for "taking over" in the absence of the supervisor. Normally, this additional responsibility will not affect the grade of the position since the assignment typically has marked limitations such as:

1. The substituting occupies only a relatively small proportion of the incumbent's time, e.g., 10 to 15 percent of the time, during the annual and sick leave of the superior;
2. The substitute does not get into the true administration of the unit's work but is more of a "lead" worker;
3. The substitute does not make decisions involving policy or take precedent setting actions;
4. The next higher supervisor performs many of the superior's duties; and
5. Decisions of any consequence are held for the superior's return.

B. Other Factors to be Considered.

Factors that could strengthen such positions to the extent of supporting a higher grade are:

1. The substitute position may be borderline in grade without the substituting responsibility;
2. The basic level of work in the unit may be close to the level of the supervisor but with room for an intermediate grade, e.g., a GS-6 working level and a GS-8 supervisor;

3. The substitute may participate in work planning and supervision just before and after the absence of the supervisor or may perform specialist work or handle problem cases normally accomplished by the supervisor; and

4. Higher level management may not assume the supervisor's higher level duties in his absence.